



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

A phonetic analysis of the which~witch merger in Edinburgh, Scotland

Citation for published version:

Fruehwald, J, Hall-Lew, L, Boyd, Z, Cowie, C, Eiswirth, M & Elliott, Z 2019, 'A phonetic analysis of the which~witch merger in Edinburgh, Scotland', 10th International Conference on Language Variation in Europe, Leeuwarden, Netherlands, 26/06/19 - 28/06/19.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



A phonetic analysis of the *which~witch* merger in Edinburgh, Scotland

Josef Fruehwald, Lauren Hall-Lew, Zac Boyd, Claire Cowie, Mirjam
Eiswirth and Zuzana Elliott
28 June 2019
University of Edinburgh

Edinburgh Speaks



Welcome to Edinburgh!



The Edinburgh Speaks Project

Edinburgh is a city of contrasts

Seat of Scottish Parliament & site of
commodified Scottishness (Hall-Lew
et al 2015)

Often characterized as basically
"English"

Considered a very middle class city

Has many highly economically
deprived areas, including adjacent
to the University.

Many neighborhoods with strong
sense of localness

Very international city, with some
areas being intensely Airbnb-ified

The Edinburgh Speaks Project

Our goal is to explore how these social contrasts are reflected in the linguistic landscape.

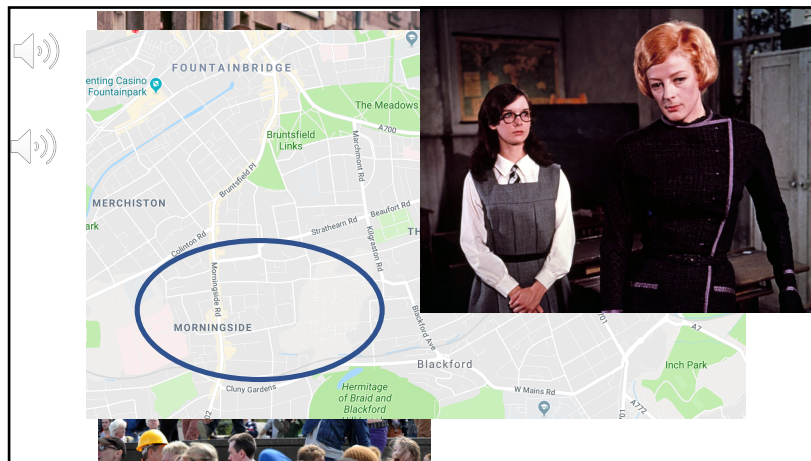
Today:

A neighborhood based analysis of the *which~witch* merger, and how it is situated with respect to linguistic continua in Edinburgh.

The Edinburgh Speaks Project

Edinburgh is a city of contrasts

/w/ ————— /ɹ/



Morningside and Leith

Leithers on Leith:

- A: It's what used to be know as the village up a stair.
 B: A village up a stair, yeah
- C: A lot of the old Leithers, up till say, a generation a generation before us, and and, so far going back, used to talk about going up to Edinburgh.
 B: Aye, that's true.
 D: Aye, going up to Edinburgh, aye.
 C: "Oh, I'm going up to Edinburgh", as if it's another planet.

Morningside and Leith

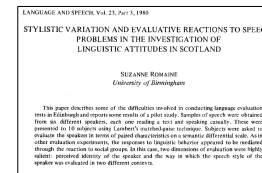
Morningsiders on Morningside



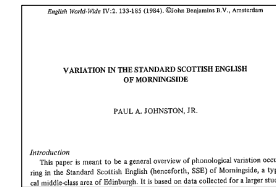
Well Morningside, of course, when I grew up, was still in some ways, a very tight community. It had been a village. I mean, we still had a village school.

Neighbourhood-Based Previous Research

- Previous research on sociolinguistic variation in Edinburgh typically mentions the Morningside accent.



(Romaine 1980)



(Johnston 1984)

Neighbourhood-Based Previous Research

- The first sociophonetic study on social class in Edinburgh compared speakers from Morningside to speakers from Pilton (next to Leith)

The identification of features of voice quality in social groups
JOHN ESLING
(University of Leeds)

Comparison of boys and men from three different social class groups (where Group II were those born WC but upwardly mobile)

(Esling 1978)

Creakier:

Harsher:

Edinburgh Neighbourhoods

These two neighborhoods constitute two ideological and linguistic poles within Edinburgh.

It's where <unk> I think of an Edinburgh accent, I think of Morningside



which~witch merger

- SSBE: Complete since the 19th century (MacMahon 1999)
- Other varieties: barely maintained (Wells 1982; Trudgill 2004).
- **Still ongoing in Scotland** (Brato 2007, 2014; Macafee, 1983), including **Edinburgh** (Schützler 2010; Reirsen 2013)

which~witch merger

Why? Anglo English Contact? (Schützler 2010)

*which~witch* merger

Why? Poshification of Scottish Standard English? (Stuart-Smith et al 2007, Dickson 2016)

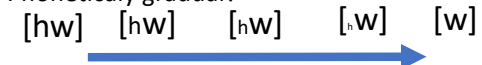
*which~witch* merger

How?

Phonetically abrupt?

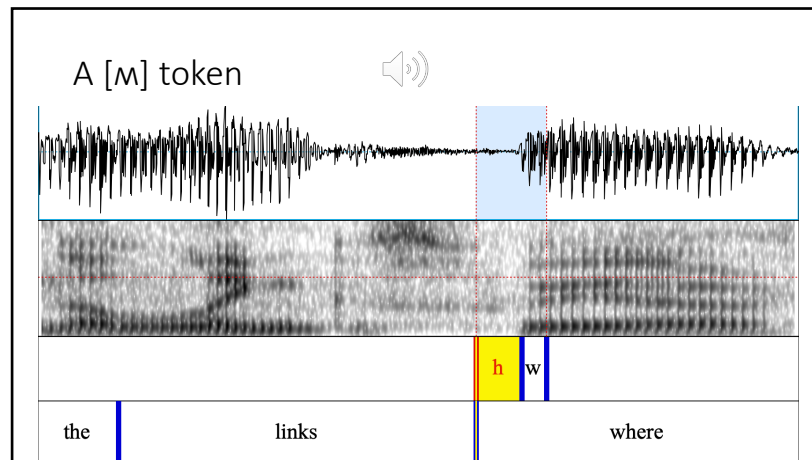
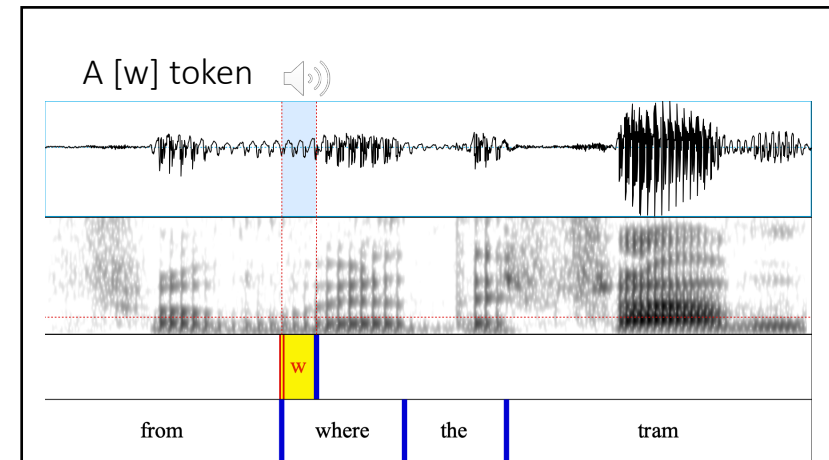


Phonetically gradual?

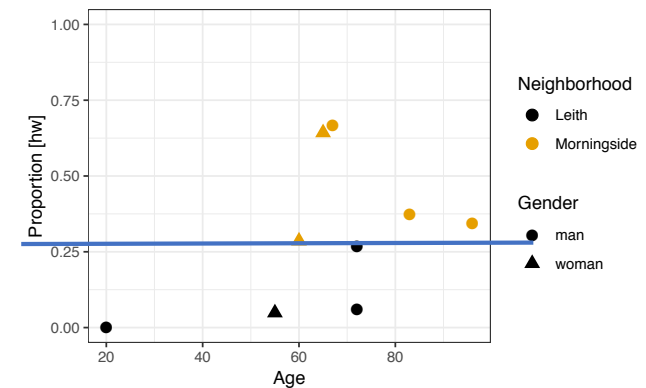


Speakers in this study

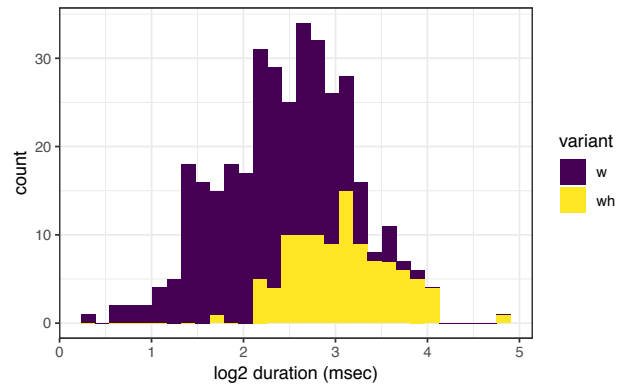
- 9 speakers from Leith and Morningside (recorded 2014)
 - 5 Morningside (Middle Class)
 - 4 Leith (Working Class)
- Levels of coding:
 - etymological /w/ realised as [ɹ] or [w]
 - [ɹ] tokens: duration of voicelessness
- 358 tokens, total



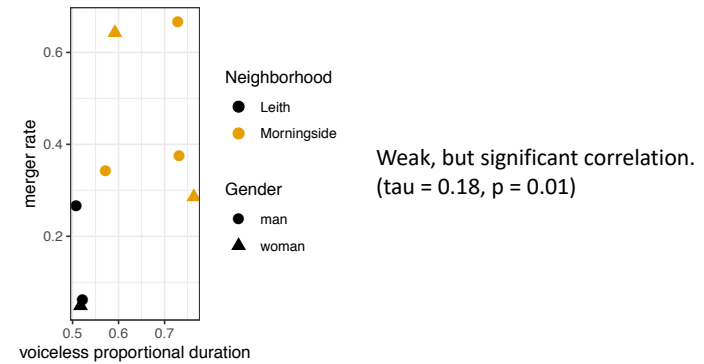
Results: Merger Rate



Results: Duration



Voiceless Duration and merger



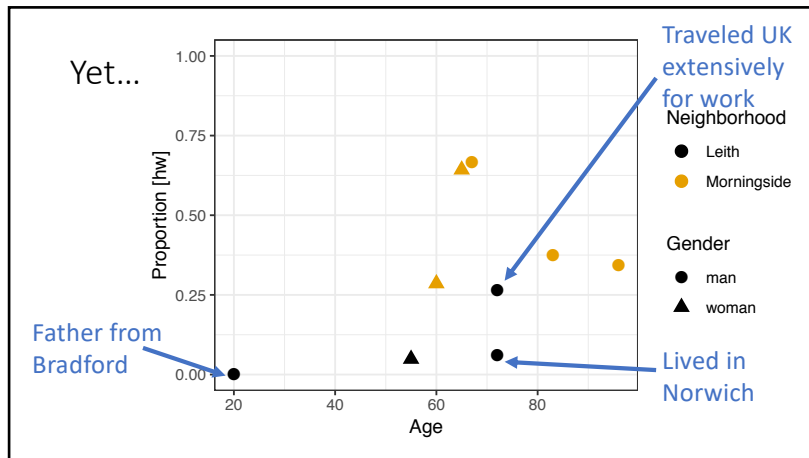
Summary

- Every Leither had a higher merger rate than every Morningsider.
- Equivocal evidence for a phonetically gradual merger.

Discussion

The social distribution of this merger is more complex than “RP Influence” or “dialect levelling.”

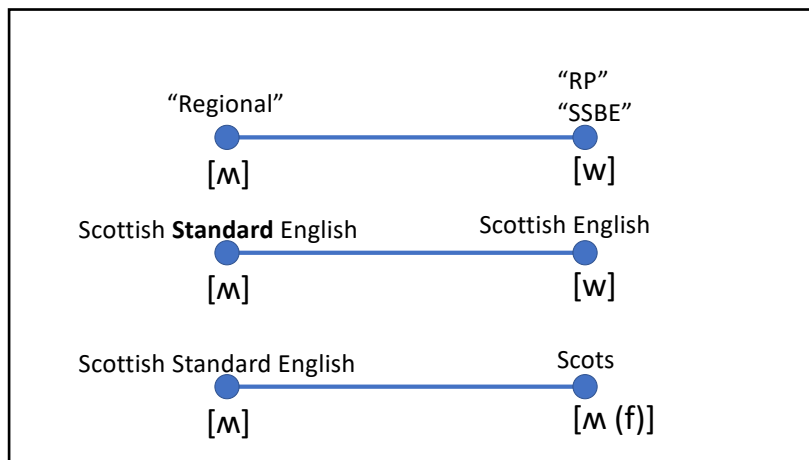
It isn't very plausible that the Leithers are attempting to approximate Anglo English models.



Yet again...



As we are speaking, it's just kinda rounded a wee bit because of all our different jobs, all met different people, in different str-parts of society and life, but I think we speak Leith.



Moving forward

- Transcription and analysis of Esling’s 1978 recordings ongoing.
- Recent fieldwork in Leith ongoing (Markl 2019)

Stay Tuned!

References

- Brato, Thorsten. (2007) Accent variation in adolescents in Aberdeen: First results for (hw) and (th). Proceedings of ICPhS XVI. url: <http://www.icphs2007.de/conference/Papers/14520/14520.pdf>
- Brato, Thorsten. (2014). Accent variation and change in North-East Scotland: The case of (h)w in Aberdeen. In Robert Lawson (Ed.), *Sociolinguistics in Scotland* pp. 32-53. Hounds, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Dickson, Victoria. (2015) *The sound of Social Mobility: Investigating "New Middle Class" Speech in Edinburgh English*. M.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, UK.
- Esling, John H. (1978) The identification of features of voice quality in social groups. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 7:18-23.
- Johnston, Paul. (1984) Variation in the Standard Scottish English of Morningside. *English World-Wide* 4(2):133-185.
- Macafee, C. (1983). *Varieties of English around the World: Glasgow*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- MacMahon, Michael K.C. (1999) Phonology. In Suzanne Romaine (Ed.), *The Cambridge History of the English Language* pp. 373-535. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Reiersen, Øystein. (2013) *Edinburgh Jockey? A socio-phonological study of accent variation and change in Edinburgh English*. Masters thesis, University of Bergen.
- Schützler, Ole. (2010) Variable Scottish English consonants: The cases of /ɹ/ and non-prevocalic /r/. *Research in Language* 8:5-21.
- Trudgill, Peter. (2004) *New-dialect formation: The inevitability of colonial Englishes*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Wells, J. 1982. *Accents of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.